

# Vt. Yankee power boost halted again

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MONTPELIER, Vt. — The Vermont Yankee nuclear plant had to stop short of its goal of increasing its power by 20 percent when two new problems cropped up at the plant Friday.

Plant spokesman Robert Williams said the 34-year-old Vernon reactor was running into a problem that twice before in recent weeks has prompted it to halt the "power ascension" process. The problems are acoustic signals from gauges that are picking up what may be new strains on the plant's steam dryer.

"We came up another 2.5 percent this morning to the 117.5 percent (of

original power) level," Williams said. "We are on a hold (due to) the comprehensive computer analysis of steam line acoustic data and to communicate with the NRC" — the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The NRC said later that a second problem possibly involving the steam dryer also showed up Friday. The steam dryer has been a source of problems at other nuclear plants around the country that have increased their power output. It is a large component at the top of the reactor that removes moisture from steam made by the reactor before it is sent to the turbines that spin to generate electricity.

NRC spokeswoman Neil Sheehan

said the plant determined on Friday that too much moisture was being allowed to go to the turbines. "An administrative limit related to the amount of moisture in the steam flowing to the turbine was exceeded," Sheehan said in an e-mail.

Raymond Shadis, technical adviser with the New England Coalition, a group critical of the nuclear industry, said gauge readings that exceeded preset limits at 105 percent, 112.5 percent and now 117.5 percent of

Vermont Yankee's original power level should not be cause for confidence.

"Apparently, (Vermont Yankee owner Entergy Nuclear) doesn't like to call this an 'experiment.' Well, it sure has the look and feel of an experiment," Shadis said. "And, if they manage to inch their way to 120 per cent, does that mean it is safe to do it day in and day out, on a routine basis from that point forward? I think not."

If this isn't an experiment, I don't know what is. What gives you people, the right to authorize this experiment and put us all in the peaceful near by towns of this Vernon plant in danger ?! ? Shame on you!

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